

Research Briefing

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Proposals to ban social media for children



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- 2 Statistics on social media and the under-16s
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Summary

In January 2026, the government announced a consultation on how to improve children's relationships with mobile phones and social media. The consultation opened on 2 March 2026 and closed on 26 May 2026. One of the issues on which the consultation sought views was whether there should be a ban on social media for children.

Potential online harms for children

Children and young people can be exposed to many types of harmful content and activity online, including on social media.

Some content is illegal, like child sexual abuse images. Other material might not be illegal but can still harm children; for example, the promotion of unhealthy body-image, eating disorders, self-harm and suicide. Or it may not be harmful because it is not age appropriate, for example, pornography, sexual content, nudity, and violent content. There are also risks from activity such as cyberbullying and harassment.

Protecting children and young people from the above types of content and activity is one of the main aims of the [Online Safety Act 2023](#).

Despite [much of the 2023 act now being implemented](#), there are ongoing concerns about children's online safety, including their use of smartphones and social media.

[Statistics published in 2025](#) by Ofcom, the online safety regulator, found that:

- ownership of mobile phones increases with age group, with 19% of those aged 3 to 5 owning their own mobile phone, increasing to 97% of those aged 13 to 15.
- the age group that uses social media most frequently is 13 to 15 (95%), with 96% of this age group having their own social media profile.
- 37% of those aged 3 to 5 use social media, with 60% having their own social media profile.

Arguments around banning social media for children

Those who support a ban say it would limit children’s exposure to online harms. For example, [the Australian Government has said that its ban on social media for under-16s will protect young Australians](#) from risks that come from “design features that encourage them to spend more time on screens, while also serving up content that can harm their health and wellbeing”.

Those who oppose a ban say it could force children into less regulated online spaces where they may be at greater risk. Others have said it could have unintended consequences, such as limiting the ability of marginalised groups to create online communities.

Government consultation on social media use

On 19 January 2026, the government announced a [consultation on children's social media use](#) to examine the most effective ways to ensure that children have “healthy online experiences”, building on the 2023 act.

The consultation - [Growing up in the online world](#) – ran from 2 March 2026 to 26 May 2026. It sought views on, among other things, banning social media use by children. The [consultation received 116,211 responses](#). The government has said that it will publish an analysis of the responses in summer 2026.

Government to introduce restrictions on social media use after its consultation

[Part 3 of the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026](#) will require the government to impose some form of age or functionality restrictions for children under 16. This was in response to successive government defeats in the House of Lords that would have meant a ban on social media use by the under-16s.

1 Consultation on social media use

In a press release of 19 January 2026, the government announced a [consultation on children's social media use](#) to examine the most effective ways to ensure that children have “healthy online experiences”.¹

In a statement to the House Commons on 20 January 2026, Liz Kendall, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, said that the consultation would seek the views of parents, children and young people, technology companies, and organisations representing children and bereaved parents. She said that the government would “look closely” at Australia, where a ban on social media for the under-16s has just been introduced, and that the consultation should be “evidence-led, with input from independent experts”.²

The consultation - [Growing up in the online world](#) - opened on 2 March 2026.³ In a press release, the government said that it was building on the [Online Safety Act 2023](#) to “consider the broader impact of technology on children’s everyday lives”.⁴ The consultation sought views on measures including:

- whether there should be a minimum age for social media.
- whether platforms should be required to switch off addictive features (for example, infinite scrolling and autoplay).
- whether mandatory overnight curfews would help children sleep better and what age they should apply to.
- whether children should be able to use AI chatbots without restriction.
- how age verification enforcement should be strengthened.
- how to help children and parents navigate the digital world.⁵

It included 3 surveys:

- full consultation for anyone – for civil society, industry and members of the public.
- survey for parents and carers of young people aged 21 and under.
- survey for children and young people aged 10 to 21.⁶

¹ [Government to drive action to improve children’s relationship with mobile phones and social media](#), Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) / Department for Education press release [online], 19 January 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

² [HC Deb 20 January 2026 c152](#)

³ DSIT, [Growing up in the online world: a national consultation](#) (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁴ [Landmark consultation seeks views on major measures to protect children on social media, gaming platforms and AI chatbots](#), DSIT press release [online], 2 March 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁵ As above

⁶ DSIT, [Growing up in the online world: a national consultation](#) (accessed 5 June 2026)

In a written ministerial statement of 2 March 2026, Liz Kendall confirmed that the government would table amendments to the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) [now an act], putting in place powers to act quickly, without the need for primary legislation, on the consultation's findings.⁷

The consultation closed on 26 May 2026. The total number of responses received across all routes was 116,211.⁸ The government has said that it will publish an analysis of the responses in summer 2026.⁹

1.1 Social media pilots

On 25 March 2026, the government announced that social media bans, digital curfews, and time limits on apps would be piloted in the homes of 300 teenagers.¹⁰ Participants would be assigned to one of the four interventions being considered as part the social media consultation:

- One group of the parents will be instructed on how to use parental controls to remove or entirely disable access to selected social media apps, practically mimicking the enforcement of a social media ban at home
- The second group will implement a one-hour-per-day cap on the most popular social media apps for teenagers, including Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat
- The third set of parents will block social media for their children between 9pm to 7am, leaving them access to the apps before and after school hours
- A final group will be recruited to continue to give children the same access to social media they already have, to provide a control group.¹¹

Data from the pilots would be assessed by the government and academics alongside the public's responses to the consultation.

⁷ [HC Deb 2 March 2026 cc52-4WS](#). The government originally announced this in a press release of 15 February 2026 - [PM: "No platform gets a free pass": Government takes action to keep children safe online](#) (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁸ DSIT, [Growing up in the online world: consultation response totals](#), 4 June 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁹ As above

¹⁰ [Children and parents to pilot social media bans, time limits and curfews at home, as government tests next steps to give UK kids their childhood back](#), DSIT press release [online], 25 March 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

¹¹ As above

2

Statistics on social media and the under-16s

Ofcom publishes the [children and parents: media use and attitude report](#), with the latest report being for 2025.

2.1

Headline statistics from Ofcom

There has been an increase in 3-to-5-year-olds using social media platforms

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in parents of 3-to-5-year-olds who say their child uses social media apps or sites. In 2021 and 2022 about a quarter used them, rising to three in ten (29%) in 2023, and almost four in ten (37%) this year.

Over a third (36%) of parents of 3-to-5s whose child uses social media use it on their child's behalf, and over four in ten (42%) say they use these sites or apps together with their child. However, two in ten (19%) of these parents indicate that their child uses these apps independently.

16% of children's profiles include pictures of themselves

Of the 8 in 10 (79%) of 3 to 17s who have their own profile on a social media, messaging, video sharing platforms (VSP, such as YouTube) or livestreaming site, 16% include a photo of themselves which anyone can see.

This varies by age group; from 8% of 3-to-7-year-old social media users, to 14% of 8-to-12s and 21% of teenagers.

Girls are more likely than boys to have hurtful interactions online

There continues to be a gender imbalance between those who experience nasty/hurtful interactions online. In the 2025 report, 34% of girls said that they have ever experienced this compared with 28% of boys, in line with last year.

More children are watching videos for schoolwork and learning

Almost half (48%) of children aged 3 to 17 who watch videos via apps or sites are now watching videos on VSPs which help them learn new things or help them with their school/homework, an increase from 42% from 2024.

More children are watching livestreamed videos

The number of children watching livestreams has been growing over the past three years. In 2025, two-thirds (66%) of 3-to-17s watch livestreamed videos, up from 63% in 2023 and 58% in 2022. The increase this year has been driven by 8-to-12s.

Some children are more likely to see ‘worrying or nasty’ content online than others

Children aged 8 to 17 who have an [impacting condition](#) (such as a disability) are more likely than their counterparts to say they have seen online content that they found worrying/nasty (41% vs 31%).

The same is true for children this age living in urban areas compared to those in rural areas (34% vs 23%).¹²

Phone ownership and social media use increase with age

On social media use by age group, the report found:

- Ownership of mobile phones increases with age group with 19% of 3-to-5-year-olds owning their own mobile phone increasing to 97% of 13-to-15-year-olds.
- The age group that uses social media most frequently is 13-to-15-year-olds (95%) with 96% of this age group having their own social media profile.
- 37% of 3-to-5-year-olds use social media with 60% having their own social media profile.
- YouTube is the most popular social media app across all age groups.¹³

Ofcom also publishes a [children and parents: media use and attitude report dashboard](#) with additional data and demographics on social media use by children.

¹² Ofcom, [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report](#), 7 May 2025, pp4-6

¹³ As above, pp7-8

Large minorities of children say they are older than they are online

Ofcom publishes data on children who fake their social media profile age as part of [their children's online 'user ages'](#) collection with the latest data being for [wave 4 2025](#). Ofcom estimated that:

- Just over a third of children (34%) aged 8 to 15 have their own profile on an online service (for example, social media) reporting a user age of at least 16.
- 20% of children aged 8 to 17 with their own profile on an online service have a user age of at least 18. This includes nearly 20% of 8-to-12-year-olds and 13-to-15-year-olds.
- Facebook, Tiktok and X are the social media platforms where 8-to-17-year-olds are the most likely to have changed their date of birth.¹⁴

It should be noted that the data is gathered from a survey, some respondents may not answer truthfully or accurately recollect the age used when setting up their own profile or how long they have had their own profile.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ofcom, [Children's User Age Wave 4, 2025](#), p51

¹⁵ As above, pp9-10

3

The UK's digital age of consent

Under data protection law – [article 8 of the UK General Data Protection Regulation](#) – the age at which children in the UK can access information society services (ISSs) is 13. This is known as the digital age of consent.

Most online services are ISSs, including social media platforms, apps, content streaming services (such as video, music or gaming services), online games, and news or educational websites.

The digital age of consent is higher in other countries. For example, it is 16 in Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands.

4 Children's online safety

Much of the recent concern about children's online safety has focused on their use of smartphones, social media and the digital age of consent of 13.

Children and young people can be exposed to many types of harmful content and activity online, including on social media. This can be user-generated or through artificial intelligence. Some content is illegal, like child sexual abuse images or content promoting terrorism. Other material might not be illegal but can still harm children; for example, the promotion of unhealthy body-image, eating disorders, self-harm and suicide. There is also content that can be harmful because it isn't age appropriate – for example, pornography, sexual content, nudity, violent content.

There are additional risks from activity such as cyberbullying, abuse and harassment.¹⁶

Children may also encounter misinformation (false or inaccurate information) or disinformation (false information which is deliberately intended to mislead).

Protecting children and young people from the above types of content is one of the main aims of the Online Safety Act 2023.

4.1 The Online Safety Act 2023

The [Online Safety Act 2023](#) received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023.¹⁷ Ofcom, the online safety regulator, is implementing the act in phases, as [summarised on its website](#). The government has published an [explainer on the act](#), summarising what it means for users and companies.¹⁸

The framework established under the act requires in-scope services (for example, social media platforms) to implement systems and processes to keep all users safe from harmful and illegal content, and to protect under-18s

¹⁶ See, for example, [Online harms: protecting children and young people](#), NSPCC blog, January 2024. Gill V, et al, [Qualitative research project to investigate the impact of online harms on children](#) (PDF), Ecorys, April 2022 (both accessed 5 June 2026)

¹⁷ For background to the act, see the Library briefings: [Analysis of the Online Safety Bill](#) (PDF) (8 April 2022) and [Online Safety Bill: progress of the bill](#) (PDF), 31 October 2023

¹⁸ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, [Online Safety Act: explainer](#), 24 April 2025 (accessed 5 June 2026)

from age-inappropriate content. Ofcom can take enforcement action against services that fail to protect users as required by the act.

Detailed information on the act is available from the [online safety section](#) of Ofcom’s website. Gov.uk has a [collection of material on the act](#).

Protecting users from illegal content

All regulated user-to-user services and search services must implement measures to reduce the risk of their services being used for illegal activity. They must also put in place systems for removing illegal content when it does appear.

[Section 59 of the act](#) defines “priority offences”. These are the “most serious and prevalent illegal content and activity, against which companies must take proactive measures”.¹⁹ Priority offences are set out in the following schedules:

- [schedule 5](#) (terrorism offences).
- [schedule 6](#) (offences related to child sexual exploitation and abuse).
- [schedule 7](#) (other priority offences; these include racially or religiously aggravated public order offences, immigration offences; drugs and weapons offences; possessing extreme pornography).

The government has amended schedule 7 of the act²⁰ so that the following are now also priority offences:

- the offence of sending photograph or film of genitals – “cyberflashing”
- the offence of encouraging or assisting serious self-harm

The [Crime and Policing Act 2026](#) has amended the 2023 act so that chatbots that were not previously in its scope will have to protect their users from illegal content.²¹ The 2026 act will also make creating or sharing non-consensual intimate images a priority offence.²²

The illegal content duties have been in force since March 2025.²³ Ofcom’s website provides detailed information on the duties.²⁴

¹⁹ As above

²⁰ Through the [Online Safety Act 2023 \(Priority Offences\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2025](#) (SI 2025/1352)

²¹ Gov.uk, [PM: “No platform gets a free pass”: Government takes action to keep children safe online](#), 15 February 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

²² Gov.uk, [Tech firms will have to take down abusive images within 48 hours under new law to protect women and girls](#), 19 February 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

²³ Ofcom, [Enforcing the Online Safety Act: Platforms must start tackling illegal material from today](#), 17 March 2025 (accessed 2 June 2026)

²⁴ Ofcom, [Illegal content duties under the Online Safety Act](#) (accessed 5 June 2026)

Protecting children

The protection of children is one of the main aims of the 2023 act.

Under the act, all regulated user-to-user services and search services must protect children from harmful content if their service is likely to be accessed by children. They must do so by, among other things:

- removing illegal content quickly or preventing it from appearing in the first place.
- preventing children from accessing harmful and age-inappropriate content including:
 - pornography
 - content that promotes, encourages or provides instructions for suicide, self-harm or eating disorders
 - content depicting or encouraging serious violence
 - bullying content.
- enforcing age limits and using age-checking measures on platforms where content harmful to children is published.

[Section 12 of the act](#) sets out the duties for regulated user-to-user services to protect children from illegal and harmful content.

[Section 81](#) requires platforms that publish their own pornographic content (known as [part 5 services](#)) to implement age-assurance measures to protect children from this content.

Since the end of July 2025, platforms have been required to use “highly effective age assurance” systems to prevent children from accessing pornography and harmful material.²⁵

Ofcom’s website provides further detailed information on the child protection duties.²⁶

Investigations and enforcement

Ofcom has taken enforcement action against companies for failing to comply with the act’s requirements.²⁷ For example:

- on 13 May 2026, Ofcom said that it had fined the provider of an online suicide forum £950,000 for not complying with the act’s illegal content

²⁵ [What’s changing for children on social media from 25 July 2025](#), Department for Science, Innovation and Technology press release, 24 July 2025; Ofcom’s website has detailed information on [age assurance and children’s access](#)

²⁶ Ofcom, [Protection of children duties under the Online Safety Act](#) (accessed 5 June 2026)

²⁷ For details of its investigations, see Ofcom, [Enforcement Programme to protect children from encountering pornographic content through the use of age assurance](#) (accessed 5 June 2026)

duties. The platform has been linked with over 130 deaths in the UK. Due to its nature, Ofcom has not named the forum or its provider.²⁸

- on 21 April 2026, Ofcom launched an investigation to examine whether Telegram is complying with its duties to prevent child sexual abuse material being shared online.²⁹
- on 6 March 2026, Ofcom announced that it had opened an investigation into whether the provider of two online image boards has failed to comply with the act's illegal content duties.³⁰
- on 12 February 2026, Ofcom fined Kick Online Entertainment SA £800,000 for failing to put in place age checks to protect children from pornographic content.³¹
- on 12 January 2026, Ofcom opened an investigation into X over the use of Grok³² to create sexualised imagery and child sexual abuse material.³³
- on 4 December 2025, Ofcom fined AVS Group Ltd (which runs 18 adult websites) £1 million for not having robust age checks in place, plus £50,000 for failing to respond to information requests.³⁴

²⁸ Ofcom, [Ofcom fines online suicide forum £950,000](#), 13 May 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

²⁹ Ofcom, [Ofcom investigates Telegram and teen chat sites](#), 21 April 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

³⁰ [Ofcom investigates online forums hosting image-based sexual abuse](#), Ofcom news [online], 6 March 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

³¹ Ofcom, [Ofcom fines porn company £800,000 for failing to introduce age checks](#), 12 February 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

³² Grok is an AI assistant and chatbot developed by xAI, an AI company founded by Elon Musk. Grok can generate text and images and engage in conversations with users, similar to ChatGPT and other tools. Unlike other chatbots, it can access information in real-time through X (formerly Twitter)

³³ [Ofcom launches investigation into X over Grok sexualised imagery](#), Ofcom news [online], 12 January 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

³⁴ Ofcom, [Ofcom fines porn company £1 million for not having robust age checks](#), 4 December 2025 (accessed 5 June 2026)

5 A social media ban for the under-16s?

Concerns about children's online safety, including the impact of social media and smartphone use, continue to be raised by charities, parents, academics and parliamentarians. However, opinions differ on whether social media should be banned for the under-16s.

5.1 Australia's social media ban

In Australia, from 10 December 2025, age-restricted social media platforms have had to take reasonable steps to prevent under-16s from creating or keeping an account. Information on the ban is available from the Australian Government's eSafety Commissioner:

- [Social media age restrictions](#)
- [Social media age restrictions hub](#)

On 16 January 2026, it was reported that social media companies had removed access to about 4.7 million accounts identified as belonging to children under 16 in the first half of December to comply with the ban.³⁵

Press and stakeholder discussion on the Australian ban is available in the further reading section of this briefing.

5.2 Calls for a UK ban

In 2025, an e-petition calling for social media companies to be banned from letting the under-16s create social media accounts received over 132,000 signatures.³⁶ In its response, the government said that it was not currently minded to support a ban. This was because it had to "strike the right balance" so that children could access the benefits of being online while putting their safety first (through implementation of the Online Safety Act). The government said it also had to protect the right of parents to make

³⁵ [Platforms restrict access to 4.7 million under-16 accounts across Australia](#), eSafety Commissioner news [online], 16 January 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

³⁶ [Introduce 16 as the minimum age for children to have social media](#), government response to E-petition 700086

decisions about their child’s upbringing.³⁷ The petition was debated on 24 February 2025.³⁸

Esher Grey, the mother of the murdered teenager Brianna Ghey, wrote to the Prime Minister in January 2026 calling for a social media ban for under-16s. She said that Brianna had a “social media addiction and struggled with her mental health from the age of 14. She developed an eating disorder and was self-harming, and all of this was significantly exacerbated by the harmful content she was consuming online.”³⁹

In January 2026, it was reported that 61 Labour MPs had called on the Prime Minister to ban social media for under-16s.⁴⁰

Kemi Badenoch, Conservative Party leader, has also called for a ban.⁴¹ She claims that, although parents are “best placed to raise their own children”, they cannot be “all-seeing”:

...Children want to be doing what their friends are doing, and are clever enough to figure out how to do it. That’s why I know that the vast majority of parents support a ban, however difficult it will be to implement.⁴²

Kemi Badenoch also said that restricting children’s social media use would also give more freedoms to adults online:

...We will no longer need to contort digital spaces to be universally “child-friendly”, or impose blanket restrictions on speech and content because children might see it. If we stop treating children like adults, we can stop treating adults like children too.⁴³

On 21 January 2026, during report stage of the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill in the House of Lords, the government was defeated on an amendment that would, among other things, raise the age limit for social media to 16 (see section 5.4 below for further detail).

5.3

Against a UK ban

Research from the children’s charity NSPCC has revealed differing opinions between children and parents on accessing social media, owning a

³⁷ [Introduce 16 as the minimum age for children to have social media](#), government response to E-petition 700086

³⁸ [HC Deb 24 February 2025 cc253-96WH](#)

³⁹ [Mother of murdered Brianna Ghey urges Starmer to ban social media for under-16s](#), Guardian [online], 19 January 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁴⁰ [More than 60 Labour MPs urge PM to ban social media for under-16s](#), BBC news [online], 18 January 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁴¹ Kemi Badenoch, [As a parent – and a Conservative – I know that banning social media for under-16s is the right thing to do](#), Guardian [online], 21 January 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁴² As above

⁴³ As above

smartphone, and the impact of technology on mental health and wellbeing.⁴⁴ On social media, children said that it was “essential” for building and nurturing relationships. They also said they would miss out on opportunities, including learning, if they were not given access.⁴⁵

A January 2026 joint statement from 42 child protection charities, online safety groups, academics and bereaved families warned that a social media ban for under-16s could have “serious unintended consequences that could put children at greater risk”.⁴⁶ The statement claims that a ban, although well-intentioned, would not improve children’s safety and wellbeing. It would be a “blunt response that fails to address the successive shortcomings of tech companies and governments to act decisively and sooner”:

Banning children from social media risks an array of unintended consequences. It would create a false sense of safety that would see children – but also the threats to them – migrate to other areas online. Children aged 16 would face a dangerous cliffedge when they start to use high-risk platforms, with girls particularly being exposed to a range of threats from misogyny to sexual abuse.

Social media bans would offer limited protection from the toxic effects of algorithms, but children - including LGBTQ and neurodiverse children - also require platforms for connection, self-identity, peer support and access to trusted sources of advice and help (including Childline).⁴⁷

Rather than banning social media, it said a “broader and more targeted” approach was needed:

...Personalised services like social media (but also games and AI chatbots) should not be accessible to children under 13 - existing law to this end should be robustly enforced.

For over 13s, social media platforms must be required to rigorously enforce risk-based age limits, blocking features and functionalities that are risky for children under a given age. Decisions should be made on the basis of the best available evidence, and it should be a tough prerequisite that, to offer online services to children in the UK, tech companies promote and protect children’s wellbeing.⁴⁸

The statement also says it is “vital that solutions are based on high-quality evidence”.⁴⁹ The Molly Rose Foundation, the NSPCC and the 5 Rights Foundation are among the signatories.

⁴⁴ NSPCC, [How do children and parents feel about the impact of smartphones and social media?](#), 14 November 2024 (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁴⁵ As above

⁴⁶ Molly Rose Foundation, [Children’s and online safety campaigners issue joint statement on social media ban for under-16s](#) [online], 18 January 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁴⁷ Molly Rose Foundation, [Joint statement from children’s and online safety organisations, experts and bereaved families on a social media ban for under-16s](#) (PDF), 18 January 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁴⁸ As above

⁴⁹ As above

Emily Setty, a professor of criminology at the University of Surrey, has argued that a social media ban “risks misunderstanding both the problem and the solution”.⁵⁰ According to Setty, the harms experienced by young people online – for example, bullying, racism, sexism, coercion, exclusion and body image pressures – pre-date social media. While digital platforms can amplify these problems, they did not create them. A ban would treat social media as the problem, rather than asking deeper questions about why such behaviours occur in the first place.⁵¹

Setty also claims that a blanket ban would treat young people as “a single homogeneous group, ignoring the diversity of their experiences, needs and circumstances”:

It assumes that what is protective for one young person will be protective for all, rather than recognising that risks and benefits are shaped by identity, relationships, resources and context.⁵²

Sonia Livingstone, a professor in the Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics, is another academic arguing against a social media ban. She has said that “caution and more evidence” is needed before introducing a ban.⁵³

⁵⁰ [I research the harm that can come to teenagers on social media. I don't support a ban](#), The Conversation [online], 21 January 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁵¹ As above

⁵² As above

⁵³ Livingstone S, [The UK shouldn't rush to a social media ban for children under 16](#), LSE blog, 23 January 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

6 Government to introduce restrictions after its social media use consultation

[Part 3 of the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026](#) will require the government to impose some form of age or functionality restrictions for children under 16. This was in response to successive government defeats in the House of Lords that would have meant a ban on social media use by the under-16s.

6.1 What will the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 do?

Power to make regulations that must be exercised

[Section 70 of the act](#) adds a new section 214A to the Online Safety Act 2023.

Section 214A(1) of the 2023 act gives the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology the power to make regulations requiring the providers of specified internet services:

- (a) to prevent access by relevant children to specified internet services which they provide, or to specified functionalities or other features of such services;
- (b) to restrict access by relevant children to specified internet services which they provide, or to specified functionalities or other features of such services.

The regulations must be made for the purpose of protecting “relevant children” from a risk of harm.

“Relevant child” means a child who is of, or under, a specified age. Different ages can be specified for the purposes of paragraphs (a) and (b) above.⁵⁴

The provisions under subsection 1(b) can include requiring the provider of an internet service to:

- (a) limit the amount of time per day, or over the course of a specified period, for which relevant children may access the service or a specified functionality or other feature of the service;

⁵⁴ Section 214A(2) of the 2023 act

(b) limit the times of day at which relevant children may access the service or a specified functionality or other feature of the service;

(c) restrict access by relevant children to a service or to a functionality or other feature of a service by virtue of which—

(i) a user of the service could receive unsolicited contact from a person who is not known to the user;

(ii) a user of the service could encounter live oral communications or live video generated directly on the service, or uploaded to or shared on the service, by a person who is not known to the user;

(iii) a person who is not known to a user of the service could encounter live oral communications or live video generated directly on the service, or uploaded to or shared on the service, by the user;

(iv) a person who is not known to a user of the service could identify the actual or approximate location of the user.⁵⁵

When making regulations, the Secretary of State must consider:

(a) the different ways in which an internet service of a particular kind is used, including functionalities or other features of the service that affect how much children use the service, and the impact of such use on the level of risk of harm that might be suffered by children, and

(b) the fact that children of different ages may be affected by an internet service, or a functionality or other feature of an internet service, in different ways.⁵⁶

Under section 214A(9) of the 2023 act, the Secretary of State **must** exercise the power under subsection (1) to introduce any provisions that they consider appropriate after the government’s consultation (Growing up in the online world). In exercising the power, the Secretary of State must “have regard” to responses to the consultation.

A draft of the regulations needs to be approved by both Houses of Parliament.

Progress statement

[Under section 71\(1\)](#) of the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, the Secretary of State must, within three months of the act passing, lay before Parliament a statement setting out:

- what progress has been made towards making the first regulations under section 214A(1) of the Online Safety Act and a timeline for making those regulations

⁵⁵ Section 214A(4) of the 2023 act

⁵⁶ Section 214A(6) of the 2023 act

Under subsection (2), the timeline must provide for the first regulations to be laid before Parliament within 12 months of the statement being laid under subsection (1).

The duty in subsection (1) does not apply where the first regulations have been made before the end of the three-month period.⁵⁷

Under section 71(4) of the 2026 act, if the first regulations have not been laid before Parliament before the end of the 12 month period mentioned in subsection (2):

(a) the Secretary of State must lay before Parliament a statement explaining why, and

(b) before the end of the period of six months beginning with the day on which the statement under paragraph (a) is laid, the Secretary of State must lay the first regulations before Parliament.

Digital age of consent

[Section 72\(2\)](#) of the 2026 act amends the UK GDPR so that the Secretary of State could, through regulations, change the UK's digital age of consent (currently 13). The age could not be lower than 13 years or higher than 16. The Secretary of State would also be able to specify different ages of consent for specific services or types of services.

The regulations would need to be approved by both Houses of Parliament.

6.2

Parliamentary debate

A summary of what happened when the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill was debated is set out below.

House of Lords report stage, 21 January 2026

On 21 January 2026, during report stage of the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) in the House of Lords, the government was defeated (by 207 votes to 159) on an amendment that would have, among other things, banned the under-16s from using social media.⁵⁸ The amendment was moved by Lord Nash (Conservative). He explained that his amendment would add a new clause to the bill that would do five things:

First, it would raise the age limit. Secondly, it would require social media companies to put in place highly effective age assurance—currently, many, if not most, social media companies have no really effective age assurance at 13. Thirdly, the amendment would direct the Chief Medical Officer to prepare and

⁵⁷ Section 71(3) of the 2026 act

⁵⁸ Amendment 94A. The text of the amendment is available at [HL Deb 21 January 2026 cc353-4](#)

publish advice to parents and carers on the use of social media by children... Fourthly, the amendment would send a message that draws a line in the sand for parents, carers and others to use when discussing social media with children, which they are crying out for. Fifthly, it would allow 12 months for implementation.⁵⁹

When speaking to the amendment, Lord Nash referred to the “societal catastrophe” of children being addicted to social media:

...Many teenagers are spending long hours—five, six, seven or more a day—on social media. The evidence of the damage this is causing is now overwhelming. We have long passed the point of correlation or causation. There is now so much evidence from across the world that it is clear that, by every metric—health, cognitive ability, educational attainment, crime and economic productivity—children are being harmed...⁶⁰

He spoke of the “health emergency confronting children”:

...Since 2016, there has been a 477% increase in children’s contact with mental health services, and eating disorders among 17 to 19 year-olds have risen sixteenfold. There has been a sevenfold rise in young girls admitted to hospital with eating disorders, and the evidence is clear that there is a strong link between this and the substantial increase in rates of ADHD, suicide, depression, anxiety and self-harm among teenagers with overexposure to social media.⁶¹

Lord Nash also said that social media was the “number one cause of disruptive behaviour” in schools, was at “the centre of county lines and radicalisation” and was being “used extensively for sextortion”.⁶²

For the government, Baroness Smith of Malvern referred, among other things, to the government’s consultation on children’s social media use. She said there wasn’t an issue about whether the government should act, but about how it should act.⁶³

The minister also noted the role of the Online Safety Act in tackling illegal content and activity and protecting children from harmful and age-inappropriate content. In response to concerns about the extent to which the act was being fully utilised, Baroness Smith of Malvern pointed out that Ofcom had been prioritising its initial enforcement action against the most “egregious harms”, for example, child sexual abuse material, self-harm content and children accessing pornography. The minister also explained how the government had “built on the act’s foundations” in relation to content that promotes self-harm and suicide, the creation of non-consensual intimate images, intimate image abuse and cyber flashing, and the use of AI to create child sexual abuse material.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ [HL Deb 21 January 2026 c307](#)

⁶⁰ [HL Deb 21 January 2026 c307](#)

⁶¹ [HL Deb 21 January 2026 cc307-8](#)

⁶² [HL Deb 21 January 2026 c308](#)

⁶³ [HL Deb 21 January 2026 c348](#)

⁶⁴ [HL Deb 21 January 2026 c347](#)

Lord Nash's amendment was passed by 261 votes to 150.⁶⁵

House of Commons rejects the amendment, 9 March 2026

When the bill [returned to the House of Commons](#) on 9 March 2026, Olivia Bailey, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Education, said that the government's consultation addressed the areas covered by the Lords amendment. She also noted that the consultation examined other issues, including children's use of AI chatbot services, mandatory overnight curfews, whether platforms should be required to switch off addictive features, and whether the digital age of consent should be raised.⁶⁶

Lord Nash's amendment was defeated (by 307 votes to 173).⁶⁷

Government amendments in lieu were agreed.⁶⁸ In summary, these would:

- amend the Online Safety Act to enable the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology to make regulations requiring internet service providers to prevent or restrict access by children of or under a specified age to specified features or functionalities of "certain internet services". The regulations would be subject to the affirmative procedure (that is, they would have to be approved by both Houses of Parliament).
- amend the UK GDPR so that the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology could change the digital age of consent through regulations. The revised age could not be lower than 13 years or higher than 16 years. The regulations would be subject to the affirmative procedure.
- enable the Secretary of State to make provision, through regulations subject to the affirmative procedure, about verifying that a data subject was at least the digital age of consent.

Ping pong

At "[ping pong](#)", agreement was reached between the Commons and the Lords when the government agreed to introduce some restrictions on social media use after its consultation.

House of Lords, 25 March 2026

When the bill returned to the Lords on 25 March 2026, Lord Nash said, among other things, that the government's consultation and the amendments that it

⁶⁵ [HL Deb 21 January 2026 cc358-60](#)

⁶⁶ [HC Deb 9 March 2026 c98](#)

⁶⁷ [HC Deb 9 March 2026 cc130-2](#)

⁶⁸ These are set out on pages 2 to 6 of [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill \(Motions relating to Lords Amendments\)](#) (PDF), 6 March 2026

had tabled to the bill represented “a blank cheque, with no definite timescale for action and no obligation to do anything”.⁶⁹

Baroness Lloyd of Effra, Minister for the Digital Economy, acknowledged that “many people” supported a social media ban. However, “other respected voices” disagreed. The consultation was therefore “the responsible path forward” and the government was clear that it would then take further action.⁷⁰

The House of Lords rejected the government’s amendments in lieu and Lord Nash’s amendment was agreed (by 266 to 141 votes).⁷¹

House of Commons, 15 April 2026

In the Commons on 15 April 2026, Olivia Bailey said that it was crucial not to pre-empt the government’s consultation.⁷² The minister explained that the government was proposing alternative amendments in lieu to those agreed on 9 March 2026:⁷³

We have tabled an amendment in lieu that commits the Secretary of State to reporting to Parliament on progress within six months of the Bill passing. We will also share future draft regulations under the Online Safety Act 2023 with relevant Select Committees and Opposition spokespeople prior to laying those regulations before the House. Finally, we have made several amendments to our power, which specify how it will be used; for example, they stipulate that it can be exercised only to protect children from harms...

(...)

Through the additions we are making to the Bill today, we are committing to report back to the House within six months, if we have not acted before then. The range of options that we are considering in the consultation is significantly wider than the options in the amendments from the other place that we are debating. The consultation will allow us to address a much wider range of issues, including critical ones, such as addictive design.⁷⁴

The government’s amendments in lieu would (as with those agreed on 9 March 2026):

- amend the UK GDPR so that the Secretary of State could change the digital age of consent through regulations (subject to the affirmative procedure).

⁶⁹ [HL Deb 25 March 2026 c1553](#)

⁷⁰ [HL Deb 25 March 2026 c1551](#)

⁷¹ [HL Deb 25 March 2026 cc1570-2](#). For details of the debate, [see columns 1550-70](#)

⁷² [HC Deb 15 April 2026 c909](#)

⁷³ These are set out on pages 1 to 5 of [Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill \(Motions relating to Lords Amendments\)](#) (PDF), 15 April 2026

⁷⁴ [HC Deb 15 April 2026 cc909-10](#)

- enable the Secretary of State to make provision, through regulations subject to the affirmative procedure, about verifying that a data subject was at least the digital age of consent.

The Commons voted to reject Lord Nash's amendment and accept the government's amendments in lieu (by 256 votes to 150).⁷⁵

House of Lords, 20 April 2026

When the bill returned to the Lords on 20 April 2026, the government was defeated on a motion moved by Lord Nash.⁷⁶ When explaining its purpose, Lord Nash referred to the recent court cases in the US that found Meta and YouTube liable for deliberately designing addictive products that harmed young people.⁷⁷ He said that his amendments would require the government to make regulations raising the age for access to harmful social media sites to 16 within 12 months of the bill passing. This wouldn't mean a "blanket ban":

...Immediately following these [US] cases, the Prime Minister made some very strong statements about protecting children from the harm of social media, and the right honourable Liz Kendall spoke only yesterday about the importance of highly effective age verification to ensure that children cannot access the harmful features of social media. This is exactly what my proposal does. I listened very carefully to what she said yesterday and, if you can get a fag paper between us, it is a pretty thin one indeed—so I have decided to take the Prime Minister at his word and, instead of batting my amendment back again, to lay an amendment to the Government's amendments to the effect that they must, rather than just may, raise the age for access to those harmful social media sites to 16 within 12 months. Those sites would be chosen very selectively and, I am sure, would be very few in number—definitely not an outright or blanket ban—and this would be stated in the Bill...⁷⁸

When making regulations, the Secretary of State would have to:

- (a) seek to protect children under the age of 16 from any general or specific characteristics of those services, features or functionalities which it is reasonable to believe, having regard to any advice provided for that purpose by relevant experts—
 - (i) are likely to cause, encourage or facilitate compulsive, obsessive, addictive or other unhealthy behaviours among children,
 - (ii) could expose children to risks of serious harm, manipulation or exploitation,
 - (iii) could expose children to illegal content or primary priority content, or
 - (iv) could expose children to serious loss of privacy or to contact from strangers;

⁷⁵ [HC Deb 15 April 2026 cc935-7](#)

⁷⁶ Motion A2, that would amend the government's amendments

⁷⁷ [Campaigners welcome Meta and YouTube's defeat in landmark social media addiction trial](#), BBC news [online], 27 March 2026 (accessed 5 June 2026)

⁷⁸ [HL Deb 20 April 2026 c519](#)

Lord Nash also explained that his amendments included a sunset clause of two years to the regulations that the government intended to introduce.⁷⁹

For the government, Baroness Smith of Malvern spoke against the amendments:

...The argument is that the amendment from the noble Lord, Lord Nash, would enable faster movement, because we would not need to consult. The Government have laid the groundwork to act swiftly on the outcome of our current consultation without the need for lengthy primary legislation. It is a short, sharp consultation, which we believe is the right thing to do to make sure that we take the right approach...In addition, the government amendment would allow any subsequent regulations to capture a wider range of harmful features and functionalities and to tailor measures to where harms are actually occurring...⁸⁰

On concerns about the [Henry VIII powers](#) in the government's amendments, Baroness Smith said:

...the power permits the Secretary of State to apply only existing parts of the Online Safety Act, with modification if needed, to ensure that the new regulations are effectively incorporated into the legal framework. The power would not allow this Government, or any future Government, to amend the existing online safety duties. We have been clear that the powers must have due regard to the effects on children of different ages and we have provided...for meaningful scrutiny, through engagement with relevant Select Committees, before any regulations are laid...⁸¹

Lord Nash's motion was agreed after a division (by 284 votes to 158).⁸²

House of Commons, 22 April 2026

When the bill returned to the Commons on 22 April 2026, Laura Trott, the Shadow Secretary of State, said there was a "huge coalition of charities backing a ban" and that attempts to "police content online" had not worked.⁸³ She claimed that "policing age" would work. The issue was urgent as children were dying. A ban would be the "most effective way" to act.⁸⁴

Munira Wilson, the Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Education, Children and Families, said that addictive design and harmful content had created a "toxic cocktail" that endangered children and young people. She urged the government "to come forward with a concrete commitment to action and a swift timeline for implementation".⁸⁵

⁷⁹ [HL Deb 20 April 2026 c519](#)

⁸⁰ [HL Deb 20 April 2026 c529](#)

⁸¹ [HL Deb 20 April 2026 c529](#)

⁸² [HL Deb 20 April 2026 cc533-5](#)

⁸³ [HC Deb 22 April 2026 c380](#)

⁸⁴ [HC Deb 22 April 2026 c380](#)

⁸⁵ [HC Deb 22 April 2026 c386](#)

Olivia Bailey said that the government would “act quickly” following the consultation – it would respond by the summer and had made a legislative commitment to report to Parliament within six months.⁸⁶

Lord Nash’s amendments were defeated (by 260 votes to 161).⁸⁷

House of Lords, 27 April 2026

In the Lords on 27 April 2026, the government moved amendments that would require the Secretary of State to, among other things, introduce regulations making such provisions as she considered “appropriate” after the consultation.⁸⁸ Baroness Smith of Malvern said this removed any question of whether action would follow, “while rightly allowing the detail of that action to be shaped by the evidence and by those most affected”.⁸⁹

The Secretary of State would have to take account of a service’s features and functionalities when deciding how to exercise the regulation making power.⁹⁰

According to the Secretary of State, the implementation timescale would be “24 months at the outside”.⁹¹

Lord Nash said that he wanted the government to introduce a minimum age of 16 for particular aspects of social media:

- harmful algorithmic addictive features, or
- features that could expose children to serious loss of privacy or contact from strangers⁹²

However, Baroness Smith of Malvern said the government’s approach was the “most responsible” one to ensure “effective outcomes for children that will last”. The minister also said that placing an age limit of 16 in the bill, as required by Lord Nash’s amendment, would require the government to pre-empt the consultation.⁹³

Lord Nash disagreed that his proposals would pre-empt the outcome of the consultation:

...They would allow the experts, including the Chief Medical Officer and the medical royal colleges, to consider the outcome of the consultation in relation to the very limited and focused proposals that I have suggested today.⁹⁴

⁸⁶ [HC Deb 22 April 2026 c376](#)

⁸⁷ [HC Deb 22 April 2026 cc393-5](#)

⁸⁸ [HL Deb 27 April 2026 cc942-3](#)

⁸⁹ [HL Deb 27 April 2026 c943](#)

⁹⁰ [HL Deb 27 April 2026 c944](#)

⁹¹ [HL Deb 27 April 2026 c944](#)

⁹² [HL Deb 27 April 2026 c948](#)

⁹³ [HL Deb 27 April 2026 c944](#)

⁹⁴ [HL Deb 27 April 2026 c962](#)

Lord Nash’s amendment was agreed after a division (by 316 votes to 165).⁹⁵

House of Commons, 27 April 2026

In the Commons on 27 April 2026, government amendments in lieu were moved that would introduce a statutory requirement that the Secretary of State “must” (rather than “may”) act following its social media consultation. Olivia Bailey said that under any outcome of the consultation, the government would “impose some form of age or functionality for children under 16”.⁹⁶ She explained that the government was focusing on addictive features, harmful algorithmically-driven content, and features such as stranger pairing, because these could be the most damaging to children’s safety and privacy.⁹⁷

Olivia Bailey also explained that the government would have to have publish a statutory progress report three months after the bill receives Royal Assent, reflecting its intention to quickly produce a response following the consultation. After that, the government would have 12 months to lay regulations, although its “firm intention” would be to move faster, with an aim to do so by the end of the year.⁹⁸ In exceptional circumstances, the government would have the option to extend the timeline by a further six months. If it did use the backstop, the government would need to explain to Parliament why an extension was needed.⁹⁹

Laura Trott, the Shadow Secretary of State, said the government’s amendments were a “huge step forward in keeping children safe and in supporting parents in their fight against screens destroying children’s lives”.¹⁰⁰ She urged the government to ensure that action was as swift as possible.¹⁰¹

Munira Wilson, the Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Education, Children and Families, welcomed the government moving a “little”, but questioned why it needed 12 months to lay regulations, with a further six months’ buffer, when countries around the world were acting now.¹⁰²

The government’s amendments were agreed after a division (by 272 votes to 64).¹⁰³

⁹⁵ [HL Deb 27 April 2026 cc963-5](#)

⁹⁶ [HC Deb 27 April 2026 c699](#)

⁹⁷ [HC Deb 27 April 2026 c699](#)

⁹⁸ [HC Deb 27 April 2026 c699](#)

⁹⁹ [HC Deb 27 April 2026 c699](#)

¹⁰⁰ [HC Deb 27 April 2026 c700](#)

¹⁰¹ [HC Deb 27 April 2026 c700](#)

¹⁰² [HC Deb 27 April 2026 c703](#)

¹⁰³ [HC Deb 27 April 2026 cc707-9](#)

House of Lords, 28 April 2026

When the bill returned to the Lords on 28 April 2026, Lord Nash thanked the government for making a binding commitment to impose some form of age or functionality restrictions for children under 16.¹⁰⁴

The government's amendments were agreed in the Lords on 28 April 2026. The bill received Royal Assent the following day.

¹⁰⁴ [HL Deb 28 April 2026 c1077](#)

7 Further reading

A selection of material on banning social media use by children is set out below. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

7.1 Stakeholders and organisations

Internet Matters, [Response to DSIT's consultation: Growing up in the online world: a national conversation](#) (PDF), May 2026

[Our bold new recommendations for the proposed under-16s social media ban](#), Mental Health Foundation blog, 2 April 2026

[Stuck on you: how to make social media good again](#) (PDF), Institute for Public Policy Research, April 2026

[Growing up online: The good, the bad and the potential ban – Children's Commissioner's Youth Ambassadors speak to Lord Nash](#), Children's Commissioner blog, 26 January 2026

[The complexities of a social media ban for children](#), CARE news [online], 23 January 2026

[Protecting young people begins with rebuilding community, not banning platforms](#), Race Equality Foundation press release [online], 21 January 2026

[Under-16s social media ban consultation](#), Barnardo's news [online], 20 January 2026

[Statement from the Children's Commissioner on the consultation to improve children's relationship with mobile phones and social media](#), Children's Commissioner statement [online], 20 January 2026

[Children's and online safety campaigners issue joint statement on social media ban for under-16s](#), Molly Rose Foundation [online], 18 January 2026

[Social media bans are the wrong approach for children](#), Molly Rose Foundation [online], January 2026

[Under 16s Social Media Ban: A premature discussion?](#), TechUK news [online], 16 January 2026

[Ban social media for under-16s to prevent harm](#), NASUWT article [online], 11 January 2026

[Smartphones have reshaped childhood](#), Smartphone Free Childhood website

[After the social media ban, is the job done on child safety and wellbeing?](#), Australian Human Rights Commission opinion piece [online], 10 December 2024

[Teens, screens and mental health](#), World Health Organization news [online], 25 September 2024

[Disconnect: the case for a smartphone ban in schools](#) (PDF), Policy Exchange, April 2024

7.2

Press

[Starmer 'set to announce under-16s social media ban'](#), Independent [online], 8 June 2026

[What Britain can learn from Australia's under-16 social media ban](#), The House [online], 4 June 2026

[Time limits, curfews or a full ban: how UK may restrict social media for under-16s](#), Guardian [online], 5 May 2026

[Social media executives deny platforms are inherently addictive to children](#), Guardian [online], 21 April 2026

[Most Australian children are ignoring social media ban](#), Telegraph [online], 13 April 2026

[Why a social media ban for teenagers misses the point](#), The Conversation [online], 2 April 2026

[Two-thirds of under-16s with accounts on Instagram, Snapchat or TikTok kept access despite ban](#), Guardian [online], 31 March 2026

[Keir Starmer says UK will 'have to act' to curb addictive features of social media](#), Guardian [online], 29 March 2026

[How will the UK respond to US court verdict on social media?](#), BBC news [online], 26 March 2026

[Social media has been harming children for some time. We must act now to stop it](#), The House [online], 26 March 2026

[Why social media bans won't make parenting easier](#), The Conversation [online], 24 March 2026

[Three months into Australia's world-first social media ban for under-16s, has it been a success?](#), Guardian [online], 4 March 2026

[The world wants to ban children from social media, but there will be grave consequences for us all](#), Guardian [online], 2 March 2026

[Mumsnet calls for under-16s social media ban with cigarette-style health warnings](#), Guardian [online], 26 February 2026

[Australia's social media ban is a high-stakes experiment](#), Snap news [online], 18 February 2026

[These are the countries moving to ban social media for children](#), TechCrunch [online], 17 February 2026

[Don't ban teenagers from social media](#), Economist [online], 12 February 2026

[Learn from Australia – banning social media for under-16s is no panacea](#), The House [online], 9 February 2026

[Even British teenagers want tighter laws around social media – but let's make it part of a broader vision for children](#), Guardian [online], 28 January 2026

['Major step': French MPs vote in favour of bill to ban social media for under-15s](#), BBC news [online], 26 January 2026

[Bereaved parents fear delays to social media ban could harm children](#), BBC news [online], 25 January 2026

[Six weeks on, is Australia's teenage social media ban working?](#), Times [online], 24 January 2026

[NSPCC: Social media ban would punish teens for big tech's failures](#), The House [online], 21 January 2026

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[Meta blocks 550,000 accounts under Australia's social media ban](#), BBC news [online], 12 January 2026

[Will other countries follow Australia's social media ban for under-16s?](#), Guardian [online], 13 December 2025

[Australia's social media ban won't stop cyberbullying](#), The Conversation [online], 10 December 2025

[What countries do to regulate children's social media access](#), Reuters [online], 26 November 2025

7.3

Academic

[Use, views and worries on age bans on social media: responses from 29,169 children in 19 European countries](#), EU Kids Online, University of Oslo, LSE Department of Media and Communications, June 2026

Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy, [Beyond social media bans: towards safer community, creativity, and learning online for our young people](#) (PDF), May 2026

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[Thousands of UK schoolchildren to take part in major study of social media use and teen mental health](#), University of Cambridge news [online], 20 January 2026

Thimm-Kaiser M and Keyes K, [What is Australia's under-16 social media ban? The world-first law explained](#), University of Sydney news [online], 5 December 2025

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Fardouly J, [Potential effects of the social media age ban in Australia for children younger than 16 years](#), The Lancet [online], Volume 7, April 2025

Blake JA et al, [Will restricting the age of access to social media reduce mental illness in Australian youth?](#), Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 59(3), 2025

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